

COMPANIONS IN THE MINISTRY OF THE IGNATIAN SPIRITUAL EXERCISES  
BRISBANE CONFERENCE 2005

**“IN THE SPIRIT FROM THE HEART PRACTICALLY”**  
COMPOSITION OF PLACE

**INTRODUCTION**

I have been asked to present this evening something of a composition of place for the beginning of our conference on the theme “*In the Spirit, from the heart, practically*” which comes from Jerome Nadal’s, ‘Way of Proceeding’.

Michael Ivens SJ, describes “composition of place” as “the preparation for prayer”, it is denoted in the Spanish text as ‘composition seeing the place’ or simply ‘composition’”. [Sp. Ex. 65, 232]. The more familiar terminology in English, ‘composition of place’, is taken from the Latin versions. In imaginatively composing a place or situation corresponding to the subject of prayer, one ‘composes oneself’, in the sense of ‘getting oneself together or becoming recollected.’<sup>1</sup> St Ignatius asks us before prayer to stop and ponder God’s presence to acknowledge that God is waiting for us to become aware of God’s desire to draw close to us, or to be aware that God is always there. So let us begin to ‘*recollect*’ ourselves or ‘*compose*’ ourselves so that we become receptive to what the Lord wants to communicate to us in the next few days.

The inspiration for the topic of our conference comes from Jerome Nadal’s “way of proceeding”. It is also inspired by the way the Spiritual Exercises draw us deeper into a relationship with the Lord, a relationship that expresses itself through loving service. Put another way to be on ‘mission with Christ’. The Exercises move us into mission, a mission characterized by love. By becoming more acquainted with the Exercises, I hope that as givers of the Exercises we will be more attentive to the purpose of the Spiritual Exercises and listen to the deeper desires of the retreatant so that the graces of the Exercise may become enduring.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ivens SJ, “*Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*”. 1998, Cornwell Press. p 47.

First of all I propose to look briefly at Jerome Nadal the man, secondly at Nadal's "way of proceeding". Thirdly to examine how his 'way of proceeding' is revealed in the Spiritual Exercises and finally how his 'way of proceeding' might help us understand the apostolic end of the Spiritual Exercises.

## **JEROME NADAL SJ**

**[1507-1580]**

Jerome Nadal was born in 1507 to Antonio Nadal and Maria Morey, both natives of Majorca. He was born in the family home, located on the street now called, Calle de Padre Nadal, about half a mile from the shore of the beautiful bay of Palma de Majorca. His father Antonio was an attorney by profession. Jerome had a younger brother and two sisters.

Nadal had met Ignatius in Paris (1534) and reacted against him. In 1545 Nadal left Majorca never to return. He arrived in Rome seeking Ignatius and his group. He spent a month touring Rome and enjoying meeting his friends and the members of this new Society going by the name of Jesus.

On one visit Nadal took Ignatius aside at dinner time and asked whether they might speak in private. Nadal told Ignatius: "Those other Fathers are stuffing me with a lot of talk about the Exercises....I know what they are up to. They want me to leave my present station in life and join your group. There are, however, many reasons that seem to argue against my fitness to take on the way of life designed in your Institute. I want you to hear directly from me an account of those reasons." He recited a list of his failed enterprises and described his bad health. His sins, however, he did not mention. Ignatius listened attentively. With a trace

of a smile, he replied gently: "That's fine. If God should call you to the Society, there will be no dearth of work that you could handle."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless Nadal began the Spiritual Exercises. November 23, 1545 was the eighteenth day of the exercises for Nadal. He describes that at five in the evening he had what he called "indescribable consolation" that penetrated his whole being, body and soul. Later that evening he made a vow that if the Society were not to accept him, he would nevertheless carry through and pronounce the vows of the religious state. On November 27, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. He was thirty-eight years old.

The Constitutions of the Society were approved by Julius III in a new bull *Exposcit debitum* in 1550. In 1551 a quorum of Professed Fathers, summoned by Ignatius gave preliminary approval of his Constitutions as they were in text A, then almost in the final form in which he left them in the text now known as B, the Autograph. Ignatius began their experimental promulgation in 1552 by sending Nadal to explain them in as many houses as possible in Sicily, Spain and Portugal.<sup>3</sup>

Ignatius described Nadal as "the one who knew our Society best". Nadal became a player in the expansion of the Society: he became Rector of the first Jesuit College in Messina, official promulgator of the newly written Constitutions all over Europe, Vicar General when Ignatius was ill, and holder of important positions after the death of Ignatius.<sup>4</sup> He was responsible for setting up the structures that regulate and govern Jesuit community life to this very day. Nadal was also responsible for some innovations in the Spiritual Exercises. He was the one who codified the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius had not prescribed any tightly

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<sup>2</sup> William Bangert, SJ. Edited and completed by Thomas M McCoog, SJ *Jerome Nadal 1507-1580*. 1992 Loyola University Press. p21-22.

<sup>3</sup> George Ganss SJ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* Translated with an Introduction and a Commentary. The Institute of Jesuit Sources. St Louis, 1970 p21.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Eaglestone and Joseph A. Munitis SJ *Remembering Inigo Glimpses of the Life of St Ignatius of Loyola* The Memorial of Luis Goncalves da Camara. Institute of Jesuit Sources 2004. p19.

formulated repetition of the Exercises. Nevertheless in the General Examen, Ignatius directed that the novice, before his vows, “should make some of the former Exercises or some others.” That was all.

Under Nadal’s direction, Jesuits began to make the modified Exercises. The first group had contact with other members of the community only in the chapel and the dining room. Nadal’s suggestion at the Roman College that the Spiritual Exercise be repeated in brief form, spread rapidly to other colleges of the Society. Groups of Jesuits especially the scholastics received it enthusiastically. In Rome the fifty who made a week of the Exercises in 1557 grew to “many” in 1565, to “the greater part” in 1570 and to seventy in 1572.<sup>5</sup>

Nadal’s suggestion soon became a common practice. The Sixth General Congregation of 1608 prescribed in Decree 29: each year every Jesuit was to spend eight or ten consecutive days in the Spiritual Exercises.

Nadal had his critics. Father Miguel de Sousa SJ wrote from Lisbon to Lainez, who was the General of the Society at the time, that Nadal was “too facile and trigger-happy in his decisions, too hurried in his interviews, too minute in his regulations, too lavish in his directives”. At times, rarely however, he gave disedification by show of crankiness. In fact while on a mission in the north of Italy, Nadal’s crankiness apparently led him to swing a punch at the Jesuit with whom he was traveling. Father Diego Miron SJ complained that Nadal left so many directives that superiors could not attend to the Society’s Constitutions and Rules, mired as they were in ‘nadalian’ minutiae.

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<sup>5</sup> William Bangert, SJ. Edited and completed by Thomas M McCoog, SJ *Jerome Nadal 1507-1580*. 1992 Loyola University Press. p208.

## OUR WAY OF PROCEEDING

Like Ignatius and the early companions Nadal was a Renaissance man, he loved to make lists, draw up rules and regulations, and express ideas in neat phrases or sayings.

When Nadal describes in general terms “our way of proceeding,” he reduced it to the triad of acting “in the Spirit, from the heart, practically” – “*spiritu, corde, practice.*” John O’Malley describes this as one of Nadal’s most telling summaries of the ideal of Jesuit life. To act “in the Spirit” meant to refer all to God and divine grace. To act “from the heart” meant to bring the feelings to bear on whatever was being done, and never to act “only speculatively” – “*Ut speculative tantum ne agamus.*” To act ‘practically’, meant that Jesuit’s affectivity was not like that of a “contemplative,” but was directed to helping others. In other words, to act “practically” meant to act pastorally.<sup>6</sup> Nadal encouraged others to go out into the cities and towns to announce the Kingdom of Heaven according to the example of Christ and the Apostles.

Nadal’s ‘way of proceeding’ has captured the essence of Ignatian spirituality. In this succinct triad he has captured, “seeking God in all things”, “and being a contemplative in action”, “the practice of the Examen” and “Discernment of spirits”. This awareness of the presence of God leads to asking: what is the more loving thing to do in this situation?

The Jesuit is turned outward toward his fellow human beings. Within him there is a drive for action (*inclinatio, efficax ad praxim*) an inclination for affective action he goes beyond the call of the contemplative. The Jesuit is therefore never idle, is always on the alert, and is sprightly, in his quest for work. “Do you not see,” asked Nadal of the Alcala community, “that we are at war?” The Jesuit is therefore ever ready with his arms. Each day he grows in learning the Society’s battle plan. But the weapons are those of the mind and heart. The battle is that of

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<sup>6</sup> John O’Malley SJ. *The First Jesuits*. Harvard University press. 1993. p251

the human good and the quest for the soul. Nadal also ventured another definition of the Society. "If you take the Society in its entirety, its Institute, and its Spiritual Exercises, you will see that the whole thing is a bundle of vivacious love."<sup>7</sup>

### **THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISE - EXERCISING OUR HEARTS**

When we speak of the Spiritual Exercises, what do we imagine we are exercising? There is no doubt that the Exercises contribute to our intellectual and spiritual growth. When we understand that Ignatius is truly exercising our hearts we will draw more fruit from our retreats. The Spiritual Exercises are the Exercises of the heart. It is no surprise then that we Jesuits call our Tertianship, the final year of formation when we experience the Spiritual Exercises for the second time, "*schola affectus*", "the school of the heart".

Nadal's triad of acting, 'take it to God' 'bring the heart to the matter' and 'act in a practical or pastoral way' is clearly the way of "the contemplative in action". It also resonates with other similar triads we know "see, judge, act" or "prayer, reflection, mission". Such triads tend to be cyclical in nature inviting us to encounter God in the action and prompt us to return to prayer. The cycle demands that at all time we be attentive to our familiarity with God through prayer, reflection and action.

Nadal would have been more than familiar with the three main ministries of the Society, outlined in the Formula of the Institute; the ministry of "the word", "the ministry of interiority" and "the ministry of service". The 'word' - preaching and teaching, 'interiority' - the spiritual Exercises, and 'service' - practical love of the poor and helping those in need. We see all three in his explanation of our way of proceeding.

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<sup>7</sup> William Bangert, SJ. Edited and completed by Thomas M McCoog, SJ *Jerome Nadal 1507-1580*. 1992  
Loyola University Press. p283.

Nadal's experience and knowledge of the Spiritual Exercises would also have influenced his understanding of 'our way of proceeding'. Several places in the Spiritual Exercises we encounter triads. We immediately encounter in the Principle and Foundation an Ignatian triad to, "praise, reverence and serve Our Lord" [23]. This can only become a reality if we know how to praise, reverence, and serve ourselves and others. To 'praise' is to 'take it to God', to 'reverence' is to 'bring the heart to the matter' and to 'serve' is to 'act'. This is the fruit of an experience of a God who creates and sustains us in love.

The second place in the Spiritual Exercises that we see Nadal's triad in action in the Examen [43]. The first point in the Examen is to 'thank God'. This is "taking it to God". The second 'recalling of our day and asking for pardon' is 'bring the heart to the matter'. Finally 'amending our ways' is the 'action'.

In another place in the Spiritual Exercises, we encounter a triad in the colloquy in the Meditation on Sin [53]. We are asked to look at ourselves and ask: 'What have I done for Christ? what am I doing for Christ?, what ought I do for Christ?' We speak as one friend speaks to another. This demands the same interior attitude as Nadal's triad that is a deep love for Christ and a deep longing to follow Christ.

In the second week of the Exercises the contemplation on the Incarnation offers us another triad. The Trinity itself is the ultimate community of love. The grace we ask for [104] "I ask for the grace to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely and so to follow him more closely". To know, to love and to serve echoes the elements in Nadal's triad of God, heart and service.

The interior knowledge asked for is one of the keys of the Ignatian mystaogy. It implies both the cognitive and the affective dimensions of the person. Both converge upon the act of election. Nadal's triad captures the key elements in Ignatian discernment, prayer and reflection leading to a loving response.

It is interesting to note the number of times that three is used in the Spiritual Exercises. Ignatius asks three times for a triple colloquy [109, 147,156]. We turn to Our Lady, the Son and the Father asking for what we want. The meditation on the three types of Persons [149] in the second week presents another triad. The first and the second person bring home the way a person can evade the basic exigencies of indifference. The third person sets out in some detail the overall dynamic of availability to God's will. It asks is the person in love with God? The three kinds of humility [165] asking us to choose, to remain in a position of unease in the presence of God and others, so that I would not want to turn away from God even in small ways, because my whole desire is to respond ever more faithfully to God's call.

Finally in the "Contemplation to obtain Love" [230] Ignatius tell us that 'love ought show itself more in deeds than in words', Nadal captures this in the third part of his triad to 'act in a pastoral or practical way'. Ignatius asks us in the first prelude to "stand before God Our Lord and of all the Angels and of all the Saints" [232] Nadal calls this 'taking it to God'. In the second prelude "to ask for interior knowledge of so great good received [233], and again in the first point he ask us to ponder with much feeling [234] in order that being entirely grateful, I may be able in all to love and serve the Divine Majesty. This is Nadal's 'bring the feelings to the matter'. Finally in the second point to reflect on myself considering what I ought on my part to offer [234] is Nadals 'acting in a practical and pastoral way'.

This presumes a real generosity of heart and takes us back to the Principle and Foundation [23] Three things are asked for; firstly gratitude and loving recognition of God's love, secondly offering all we have to God and thirdly recognition of the true source and end of everything. All our love is to be orientated toward all I see and do. We become aware that the love of the Lord flows through me to others and through others to me.

## CONCLUSION

We make the Spiritual Exercises in order to let God remove all that hinders us from being in tune with God's action so that God can shape us and our actions in accordance with God's purpose. The Spiritual Exercises are an encounter with the risen Lord calling us from anonymity, from emptiness, from a too-narrow vision. The Lord calls us into a new reality opened up by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The Lord calls us by name and does so from beyond the boundary of death. In the gospels, the appearances of the Risen Lord leads all into a mission. Whoever has really encountered him must testify of him and spread the news of the resurrection. Such an experience one cannot hold for oneself. In our being sent by Jesus we experience the intimacy of being accompanied by him. We are privileged to experience what St Paul says, "I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2.20). The true union is not in feelings or words, but in the mission toward the people, in the service of everyday life.

The Spiritual Exercises lead us deeper into an apostolic life, dominated by a deeper personal and familiar relationship with God. In other words the Spiritual Exercises clarify our mission. The fact that Jesus entrust to us his mission deepens our union with him. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Jn 20:21)

Unless our sense of mission remains nourished, alive and keeps on growing - we risk its diminishment in our lives and perhaps even its demise. Mission requires tending. We prepare the way for the deepening of mission in three crucial ways;

1. By bringing a deliberate attentiveness and acknowledgement to our relationship with the Lord and safeguarding quality time for prayer.
2. By paying attention to our ongoing human development by integrating our shadow side, taking seriously the call to become whole.
3. By choosing a discipline that leads us more and more toward basic integrity, preferring transparency and balance in our lives.

Jerome Nadal in his “way of proceeding helps us to remember that the graces of the Spiritual Exercises are a lived reality in our daily lives. He knew that the only pathway to the attainment of Ignatian indifference is a life-long commitment to prayer, to the relationship with God and to the examination of consciousness that will gradually supplant all our disordered inclinations with a growing love of God above things. His way reminds us as givers of the Spiritual Exercises to look beyond the Exercises themselves to the mission of Jesus. It reminds us that our response is to be like St Peter ‘Lord you know everything; you know I love you’, and to accept that this may ‘take me where I would rather not go’. (Jn 21:15-18)

Ian Cribb SJ

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